

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

From Research to Practice, a column dedicated to recognizing successful "bridges" between researchers and practitioners, reports on research with practical implications for youth civic engagement. Additionally, it presents concrete examples of how practitioners have applied this research to encourage the participation of young people in civic and political life.

IN USE: THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS REPORT

Four years after its original publication, *The Civic Mission of Schools* (CMS) report is being used daily to inform practice and influence policy. It is being widely disseminated and used in a number of innovative ways including serving as the basis for discussion at many state summits on civic education that have occurred since 2003; as required reading in teacher education courses; and, as an advocacy tool for those seeking to create or support civic education policy.

A conservative estimate suggests that over 30,000 copies of *The Civic Mission of Schools* report have been distributed across the country. Evidence suggests that people are not just reading the report, but they are also using it to inform action. In fact, in 2004, the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Public Education reported that *The Civic Mission of Schools* had had a "galvanizing influence" on law-related education in America.

This article presents three examples of how the CMS report is being used in planning, research and teacher preparation. The first example shows how schools and districts can use the report for planning. The second example presents a research project that tested the report's "six promising approaches" to civic education. And the third example illustrates how the report is being used in professional development opportunities for teachers.

EXAMPLE #1: INFORMING SCHOOL AND DISTRICT LEVEL PLANNING

One goal of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is to ensure the CMS report does not "sit on the shelves," but instead is used by schools and school districts to improve and build upon their own civic education efforts. To support such groups, the Campaign developed an Advocacy Toolkit. Among other things, the Civic Mission of Schools' Advocacy Toolkit provides guidance on how the report can be used by schools and school districts in planning sessions centered on civic education.

Specifically, it suggests that school leaders: *can analyze their own schools' curricula in light of the Civic Mission of Schools' six promising approaches, assessing where civic learning can be best integrated (for instance, through choice of texts with civic content in reading instruction).*

For school district leaders the Toolkit suggests: *developing new standards or assess existing ones in light of the six promising approaches recommended in The Civic Mission of Schools report*

and invite stakeholders from the schools, civic groups, business and community leaders, and parents, to participate in this process.

The Advocacy Toolkit can be found at www.civicmissionofschools.org.

EXAMPLE #2: INFORMING A RESEARCH AGENDA Several researchers have built upon findings from *The Civic Mission of Schools* report (see the text box on page 11 for examples). One study in particular, the *California Survey of Civic Education*, tests the impact of the "six promising approaches" on students' civic outcomes. The survey, commissioned by the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, was constructed and administered by Professor Joseph Kahne and Ellen Middaugh of Mills College. According to the authors, "Our survey indicated that the school and classroom practices emphasized in *The Civic Mission of Schools* report and related strategies were associated with higher levels of civic capacities and commitments."

The report recommends that professional development programs for teachers on civic education incorporate "research-based promising approaches." The report concludes by pointing out a need for future research that would: (1) better define the effects of various promising approaches on desired civic education outcomes and (2) distinguish dispositions and effects as they relate to various groups of students. In addition, research should be conducted to determine teacher and administrator perspectives on these practices.

EXAMPLE #3 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS

The California Survey of Civic Education report indicated the need for teacher professional development programs for civic education, which is something that the New Hampshire Alliance for Civic Engagement (NHACE) is in the process of organizing.

For the 2005-2006 school year, the New Hampshire Board of Education revised the state's minimum standards and strengthened the civic/government requirement. In order to graduate from high school, students must take a free-standing (half-credit) civics course on both national and state issues in addition to the US/New Hampshire history requirement. NHACE learned that, faced with this new requirement, teachers needed better resources to teach state civics.

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As a result, NHACE is bringing together eight experienced high school government and civics teachers from around the state for four days in the spring/summer of 2007 to develop lesson plans for the NH state civics curriculum. The teachers will have an opportunity to learn about current research and best practices and will hear from various state officials about their work. *The Civic Mission of Schools* report will provide an overview of current trends and research on civic education for the teachers, who will also hear from education professors in the state. The final product will be lesson plans that will be made available to all schools and teachers in the state.

Mica Stark, Managing Director of the NH Institute of Politics at Saint Anselm College, sees this initiative as a great way to connect existing resources and talented teachers. He also notes that the initiative could be easily replicated by practitioners in other states.

For more on ideas on how to implement the findings from *The Civic Mission of Schools* report, contact CIRCLE's Youth Coordinator, Abby Kiesa at akies@umd.edu. *

A SAMPLE OF RESEARCH INFLUENCED BY THE CMS REPORT

"Longitudinal Gains in Civic Development through School-Based Required Service"

by Metz, E. & Youniss, J.
Political Psychology, 2005

"Civic Mission of School Libraries"

by Kranich, N.
American Association of School Librarians, 2006

"Why We Vote: How Schools and Communities Shape Our Civic Life"

by Campbell, D.
Princeton University Press, 2006

"Deliberative Learning: An Evaluative Approach to Interactive Civic Education"

by Kioussis, S. & McDevitt, M.
Communication Education, 2006

CIRCLE IN THE NEWS

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The Washington Post,
2/17/2007
- ≡ "Can Political Participation be Taught," by J. Miller
Education Week
2/21/2007
- ≡ "Recruiting for the Right" by K. Field
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and Peter Levine" by A. Frank
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2/5/2007
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Effective" *Globe-Gazette* Editorial
Globe-Gazette (IA), 3/18/2007
- ≡ "Teachers Say Civics Lessons Should be Part of
Curriculum" by P. Davis
Providence Journal Bulletin (RI), 1/16/2007